

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 IO-10 SY-05 OPR-02 /089 W

----- 034485

R 281800Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7733

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 1628

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, DM

SUBJ: THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF DAHOMEY'S REVOLUTIONARY MILITARY

GOVERNMENT' S ACCESSION TO POWER IS WITHOUT INCIDENT

BUT COUP ALERT CONTINUES

REF A. COTONOU 1620 B. COTONOU 1603 C. COTONOU 1588

1. THE OCT 25-26 CELEBRATIONS AT LOKOSSA OF THE MILITARY REGIME'S ADVANT TO POWER BY COUP D'ETAT THREE YEARS AGO TOOK PLACE WITHOUT INCIDENT. HOWEVER, SECURITY MEASURES ALONG ACCESS ROADS AND THROUGHOUT CEREMONIES WERE SEVERE; FEW EXCEPT SCREENED REVOLUTIONARY MILITANTS COULD GET NEAR. SOME WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE TRIED TO GET TO LOKOSSA STAYED HOME BECAUSE THEY FEARED SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN. ATTENDANCE WAS SMALLER THAN AT ABOMEY LAST NOV 30 (OF COURSE THE POPULATION OF THE AREA IS SMALLER).

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2. OTHER THAN KEREKOU'S SPEECH, WHICH WAS A MARXIST-LENINIST PROPAGANDA TRACT ON INTERNAL POLITICS WITH NO REFERENCE TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES OR THEIR PROGRAMS HERE, THE ONLY NOTEWORTHY ITEMS WERE THE PRESENCE OF THE NIGERIAN COMMISSIONER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, COL JOSEPH GARBA, DURING THE MAIN EVENTS, AND THE FURTHER PUBLIC HUMILIATION OF THE SOVIET AMB IVAN IL'IN BY PRES KEREKOU. AT SOCCER FOOTBALL MATCH, KEREKOU, WHO WAS SHAKING HANDS WITH CHIEFS OF MISSION WHO ATTENDED, LIFTED IL'IN'S ARM OVER HIS HEAD AND, ACCORDING TO SOURCES NEAR ENOUGH TO HEAR, CHASTISED HIM FOR HIS COUNTRY'S FAILURE TO COME TO AID OF ITS SOCIALIST BROTHER COUNTRY DAHOMEY. SOVIET AMB, STUNG, APPARENTLY COULD HARDLY RESTRAIN HIMSELF FROM MAKING A SHARP REACTION ON THE SPOT. HE DEPARTED LOKOSSA IN A FIT OF EXASPERATION BEFORE THE PROGRAM WAS COMPLETED.

3. COUP ALERT CONTINUES. THE GUARD AT THE PRESIDETIAL PALACE HAS BEEN INCREASED. SOLDIERS HAVE EVEN BEEN STATIONED AT MOST OF THE BUILDING'S MANY WINDOWS. BORDER WITH TOGO REMAINS CLOSED.

4. THE EMBASSY HAS NOW LEARNED THAT THE DAY BEFORE (OCT 17) THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE COUP PLOT, A POLICE OFFICER (ELIE HOUNKPONOU) WHO HAD BEEN IN CHARGE OF ZINSOU'S PERSONAL SECURITY DURING THE LATTER'S PRESIDENCY, WAS ARRESTED UNDER SUSPICION OF BEING A KEY ELEMENT IN A PLOT. APPARENTLY WEAPONS WERE FOUND AT HOUNKPONOU'S HOME AND UNDER TORTURE HE REPORTEDLY REVEALED THE NAMES OF OTHER POLICE OFFICERS INVOLVED. AS A RESULT THREE OR FOUR OTHER PERSONS WERE ALSO ARRESTED OVER THE WEEKEND, AND CYRILLE ODOUTAN, HEAD OF THE DEPT DE SURVEILLANCE TERRITORIALE (LOCAL EQUIVALENT OF THE FBI) REPORTEDLY FLED BEFORE HE COULD BE PICKED UP.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GOVT INITIALLY SET UP ITS COMMAND OPERATIONS CENTER AND ORDERED DETENTION OF SUSPECTED OR KNOWN ZINSOU SYMPATHIZERS AS A PREEMPTIVE MOVE AGAINST LONG STANDING RUMORS THAT A COUP WOULD BE LAUNCHED AROUND OCT 26, THE REPORTS ON HOUNKPONOU AND ODOUTAN SUGGEST THAT GOVT MAY ALSO HAVE DISCOVERED REAL ELEMENTS OF A PLOT.

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6. KEREKOU'S ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS WILL BE SUBJECT OF SEPTTEL TOMORROW.
ENGLE

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